

# SECOND CASE

OF

## EXCISION OF THE KNEE JOINT,

SUCCESSFULLY TREATED.

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## EXCISION OF THE KNEE JOINT.

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JOHN REITH, *aet. 14*; from Old Machar parish; bulky for his age, with a florid complexion, and of a very scrofulous diathesis, having numerous cicatrices of former strumous abscesses on both sides of his neck, both groins, and all round the ankle joint of the right limb; was admitted into Lazarus Ward, under the care of Dr Keith, on the 8th of May 1854, with disease of the right knee joint, occasioning so much suffering as to render him anxious to have the limb, or at least the joint removed.

*Physical signs.*—The right extremity is wasted, the leg drawn up and fixedly bent at a right angle to the thigh. The knee is greatly enlarged, tender to the touch, and incapable of being moved in any degree, the attempt causing much suffering; the skin over the whole limb, leg, knee, and thigh, is so dry and scurfy, as to present very much the appearance of ichthyosis; there are two openings in the ham, one on each side of the popliteal space, from which a sero-purulent fluid is constantly discharged, and both openings communicate with the knee joint.

*History.*—He states that seven years ago, when jumping from a dyke, he sprained his right ankle joint; this was followed by a succession of abscesses, the last of which only healed up at the end of three years of constant suffering. Continuing well and at school for two years and a half, he met with an accident eighteen months ago, which, bruising the knee, was followed by much pain and swelling of the joint. With little done deserving the name of treatment, six months of confinement to bed elapsed, when abscess from within the joint found exit by one of the openings in the ham, after which he was so much relieved as to be able to go out on crutches, his knee bent up as it is at present. The opening being very imperfect, a fresh collection of matter formed soon after, and burst at the opposite side of the ham, and these for twelve months have continued to discharge daily, the joint all the time much enlarged, tender to the touch, and more or less painful on movement up to the present time. Pulse never under 120.

On consultation it was agreed to excise the joint.

*Wednesday, 17th May, 10.15 A.M.*—Under chloroform; the joint was opened by the semilunar incision of the late lamented Dr Richard Mackenzie. In lifting up the flap so formed, osseous union, partly accomplished between the femur and patella, had to be broken up. 1 inch and  $\frac{5}{8}$ ths was sawn off the femur, and  $\frac{3}{8}$ ths of an inch from the tibia, making in whole 2 inches of bone removed. The surface of the patella was pared and smoothed, and the gelatinous, degenerated, synovial membrane peeled and dissected from the face of the flap. Three small vessels were tied, the limb straightened, and the wound closed by six stitches, was dressed with ointment, compresses, and a many-tailed bandage, and laid into a well-fitting Macintyre's metal fracture-frame.

After being put to bed 20 drops of laudanum were administered. To have arrowroot and brandy for dinner. 9 P.M.—Stomach irritable, vomited the arrowroot, retains port wine and water. Limb lies comfortably, feels the frame press hard on the outside of the knee, which was at once remedied by a soft pad of lint. It added also to his comfort to have the heel set entirely free from pressure, accomplished by passing a long thickish pad under the tendon Achilles. To repeat the anodyne at bedtime.

*May 18th, Thursday, 1st day, 7 A.M.*—Has passed a quiet night and slept a good deal. Tongue clean and moist; pulse 130. Ate half a biscuit with relish early this morning; desires porridge to breakfast—allowed; to have soup with chicken for dinner, and 2 oz. of port wine. 8 P.M.—The limb quite easy. The stomach flatulent and irritable. Colic pains in the abdomen. Apply a mustard cataplasm, and give half an ounce of aromatic mixture occasionally.

*May 19th, Friday, 2d day, 7 A.M.*—Passed a quiet night; much sleep, and no anodyne given; pulse 120. Feels well to-day and ready for his breakfast. 10 A.M.—Removed all the dressings from the knee and renewed the whole. The wound adherent throughout; no discharge to speak of. The limb feels comfortable. 8 P.M.—Comfortable throughout the day; pulse 120; tongue clean and moist; bowels not moved since Wednesday morning. Give 5 gr. of compound rhubarb pill to-night.

*May 20th, Saturday, 3d day, 7 A.M.*—Slept well; no opiate; bowels have moved freely; limb quite easy; an erysipelatous blush on his right cheek; his pulse frequent, on all occasions above 130. Paint the cheek with strong mercurial ointment, and to have 20 drops of tincture of sesqui-chloride of iron every four hours regularly. 10 P.M.—A comfortable day. Redness on right cheek, spreading across the root of the nose. Continue mercurial ointment and tincture of iron.

*May 21st, Sunday, 4th day, 10 A.M.*—Slept well; no opiate; no thirst; pulse 132; tongue clean and moist; both the cheeks now red and swollen; the limb easy; dressed it to-day, and removed three stitches; the wound only partially united; the old openings in the ham discharging pus freely, of a healthy character. 9 P.M.—Easy; bowels open; appetite good.

*May 22d, Monday, 5th day, 10 A.M.*—Slept soundly towards morning, restless prior to that, but not thirsty or heated; bowels moved naturally at midnight; the face less red and swollen; continue the iron and ointment. 8 P.M.—Dressed the wound, it looks healthy; pus ripe, but rather copious from the ham.

*May 23d, Tuesday, 6th day, 10 A.M.*—Slept soundly since 2 A.M.; bowels opened at 8; took a good breakfast, and feels better; tongue clean; pulse 120; there is still a slight flush on his cheeks; continue iron and ointment; dressed the wound, it looks well.

*May 24th, Wednesday, 7th day.*—As at last report. Dressed the wound; the discharge of pus considerable; continue the medicines, and 3 oz. of port wine daily.

*May 25th, Thursday, 8th day.*—Passed a restless night until 2 o'clock, when he obtained ease by having the bandages loosened; dressed the limb, and detecting a sinus burrowing along the inside of the knee, laid it open and pressed out its contents; a poultice to be applied to that part only.

*May 26th, Friday, 9th day.*—Slept well; erysipelas going; the skin of his face desquamating; removed the last stitch, and the three ligatures; wound looks well.

*May 27th, Saturday, 10th day.*—Slept well; wound granulating kindly; discharge moderate; re-adjusted the limb, and supported the frame on a wooden platform; bowels regular; secretions black from the effects of the iron; the skin peeling off his face; to intermit the iron and mercurial ointment.

*May 28th, Sunday, 11th day.*—Was pained for some hours by the heel resting

on a pad or small cushion, which hindered rest, slept towards morning; readjusted the whole limb; it lies straight; the wooden platform steadies the frame admirably. The abscess in the ham is daily syringed out, it still yields pus copiously.

*May 29th, Monday, 12th day.*—Has passed the most comfortable night of any since the day of operation. Appetite good; tongue clean; bowels regular; pulse 120. The wound looks well, and the discharge is moderate. Meat allowed; continue wine.

*May 30th, Tuesday, 13th day.*—Passed a quiet night; bowels moved at 4 A.M. Complains to-day of a sense of heat at and under the head of the fibula of the right leg; fluctuation was detected along the line of that bone, without any redness or other sign of recent action; an incision, four inches in length, was made along the whole extent of an abscess, and at least 2 oz. of thick pus escaped.

*May 31st, Wednesday, 14th day.*—Slept pretty well; bowels regular. The abscess in the ham still discharges, and still accumulates a considerable quantity of pus daily.

*June 1st, Thursday, 15th day.*—Made a free counter opening above the remains of the inner condyle of the femur, into the abscess which has so long existed in and around the popliteal space. Bowels open; appetite good.

*June 2d, Friday, 16th day.*—Slept well; feels comfortable.

*June 3d, Saturday, 17th day.*—Doing well; the discharge from the abscesses moderate; the wound along the front of the joint is to-day united throughout its whole extent. Meat continued; wine increased to 4 oz. daily; a scruple of phosphate of lime in combination with 5 grs. of sugar, to be given morning and evening.

*June 4th, Sunday, 18th day.*—Feels well; allowed a pint of porter in addition to his wine.

*June 10th, Saturday, 24th day.*—Doing well in every way. He was for the first time lifted out of bed with his limb still in the fracture frame.

*June 13th, Tuesday, 27th day.*—A sense of deep fluctuation at the upper and outer edge of the patella. A needle knife inserted has given vent to a tea-spoonful of ripe pus. The incision has been extended to a full half inch, and the cavity stuffed with lint soaked in turpentine liniment. The bowels rather loose; stop the porter.

*June 18th, Sunday, 32d day.*—Going on well; bowels regular. The wound of the operation firmly united. Porter allowed again.

*June 21st, Wednesday, 35th day.*—Feels as if he could lift his leg by his own effort, but is not allowed to try. He has no pain whatever on its being lifted out of the frame while being dressed.

*July 1st, Saturday, 45th day.*—The joint looks very natural in shape and appearance. The skin of the whole limb is now healthy, from the daily inunction of citrine ointment. The health and appetite are good; continue meat and wine, porter and phosphate of lime.

*July 20th, Thursday, 64th day.*—Going on well. A sinus still open on the outside of the joint, occasioned by the last superficial abscess; an opening and counter-opening are kept open by a small seton tape, run along the sinus. He feels strong and well.

*August 8th, Tuesday, 83d day.*—He can now lift his limb out of the frame, supporting the thigh with his own hands; the union at the joint thus bearing the weight of the lower limb, and this without exciting any pain. Health good; appetite keen.

*August 14th, Monday, 89th day.*—Feels well. Removed the small seton. The old abscess in the ham having still the depth of an inch, was laid freely open with the knife, and stuffed with lint and turpentine.

*August 25th, Friday, 100th day.*—Was out of bed yesterday, and with the aid of staves walked to the ward door; the first attempt he has yet made.

*Sept. 1st, Friday, 106th day.*—Opened a small collection of pus at the inner

